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*Why We Hate: Understanding the Roots of Human Conflict*. By Michael Ruse. (Oxford: OUP, 2022. Pp. xv + 320. Price \$24.95.)

In the Preface to *Why We Hate*, its author, the prolific philosopher of biology Michael Ruse, notes that there is a paradox that has never left him since he was a child raised as a Quaker in the 1940s: If we are social beings, how can we be so hateful to each other? The goal of his book is to put an end to this paradox with the help of discoveries and reinterpretations from the past two decades that show why ‘despite the efforts of conservative politicians, hatred is not the inevitable fate of humankind’ (p. 259). Ruse argues that sociability is our essence as shaped by Darwinian selection, while hatred and its perfidious effects are primarily produced by psychological maladaptations—simply put, hatred emerges from the ‘stone age mind’ housed in our ‘modern skulls’. Thus, sociability and hatred are not the two faces of a human nature wrongly believed to be Janus-like. Sociability and hatred do not need to coexist. And, for Ruse, there was a time—the pre-agricultural time—in which they did not.

Ruse claims that the recent move to agriculture, which took place roughly 10 kya (10 thousand years ago), generated a radically new and relentlessly changing social environment that triggers our ‘old-way adaptations’ in manners that are detrimental to fitness. As framed by the book, there was a fundamentally egalitarian original—and

‘natural’—state of non-violence between nomadic hunter-gatherers living in small bands surrounded by plenty of land and resources for everyone in the Pleistocene and then—given the move to agriculture—anti-social behaviours and attitudes that Ruse thinks were largely unknown by our pre-agricultural ancestors such as wars and discrimination based on gender, class, and race became the new normal as humans started living in large, sedentary, and non-egalitarian groups marked by the scarcity of—and fierce competition for—desirable land in the Holocene.

*Why We Hate* has five chapters and it is possible to organize them in three parts. The first part comprises chapters 1 and 2, the second part is composed of chapters 3 and 4, and the third part is constituted by chapter 5.

The first two parts aim to describe what science and culture have to say about the etiology and ethics of war and prejudice, two salient expressions of hatred. Science is represented by an evolutionary approach to human nature that includes biology, psychology, anthropology, primatology, and archaeology. Culture is mostly represented by English modern literature and Christian classical texts—one does not find Thucydides’, Sun Tzu’s, or Clausewitz’s insights into war here, though interestingly enough, in the last paragraph of the book, Ruse decrees that *Why We Hate* will ultimately help its readers to understand why life is not absurd and so why Albert Camus, the Continental writer and Editor-in-Chief of the French Resistance newspaper *Combat* during the Second World War, ‘could not have been more wrong’.

The third part of *Why We Hate* delineates Ruse's interpretation of evolutionary ethics and advances moral/biological reasons for not hating.

Some comments regarding the alleged breakthroughs from the past two decades presented as pillars of the book are in order. Start with the fact that, despite Ruse's claims to the contrary, the model of social evolution in which war is 'an intruder brought by circumstances' (p. 56) and 'a distortion, something forcing us away from our nature, something brought on by the advent of civilization' (p. 208) is far from being a scientific consensus. In reality, the debate about the evolution of coalitional aggression is not settled. It has become even more active since the publication of Keeley's *War Before Civilization* in 1996. Rousseauians, Hobbesians, and others authors holding inbetween positions, are still tussling over this issue in leading scholarly journals. Certainly, it's not the case that, as Ruse scornfully declares, those who oppose the model of social evolution in which peace is the default state are stubborn defenders of the outlandish 'killer ape hypothesis' from the 1950s—the killer ape hypothesis asserts that humans are *the apes* with passion for killing and cannibalism and that they are the only animals involved in coalitional killing of adult conspecifics. The male warrior hypothesis, the intergroup dominance hypothesis, the imbalance of power hypothesis, the risk contract theory of warfare, and other current attempts to explain intergroup violence and war—hypotheses and theories that Ruse does not even mention in his summary of the 'biology of war'—are not equivalent to the killer ape hypothesis. To affirm, on the other hand, as Ruse does, that people who contradict the model of social evolution he subscribes to are influenced more by the Christian doctrine of the original sin that taints human nature

than by empirical evidence and present research is profoundly uncharitable, to say the least. It's a misrepresentation of the debate.

What Ruse offers as the 'biology of war' is basically a report of—and a collection of quotes from—the publications of Brian Ferguson, Douglas Fry, Raymond Kelly, and other recent representatives of the Rousseauian tradition of pacifying the pre-history. Ruse is an avowed supporter of the 'noble savage' school of thought and extols Rousseau as an empirical scientist who was 'as ultra-Darwinian as you can get' (p. 56). He pays no attention to actual arguments provided by the other side of the discussion. There is not a single reference to influential contemporary mainstream investigators whose findings are not compatible with the Rousseauian tradition such as Richard Wrangham or Samuel Bowles. And when Ruse does mention something that could challenge the 'noble savage' narrative, like the remains discovered in Nataruk (Kenya) in 2016, he dismisses this finding in only one line saying that there is a brief communication questioning it as evidence of intergroup warfare and adding to his point that the remains' date is about 11.5 kya, which is 'within our bounds' (p. 48). This line of reasoning is misleading. What is at stake is the existence of warfare among hunter-gatherers, and it should be clear that the 10 kya mark is not relevant everywhere on Earth to distinguish between agricultural and hunter-gatherer populations since agriculture developed much later or never in different parts of the inhabited world.

As for the egalitarian component of Ruse's view of social evolution, it is important to understand that pre-agricultural groups were far more complex than his model suggests. Humans occupied a wide range of diverse habitats and this fact is reflected in diverse

social organizations, in the appearance of institutions to support public works, as happened in Gobekli Tepe (Turkey), as well as in the practice of advanced-level medicine through surgical amputations 31 kya in East Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo)—sure enough, during the Pleistocene not every human group was an egalitarian mobile small band of foragers. Copious evidence, particularly from coastal regions, suggests that settlements preceded agriculture and, consequently, that low mobility and inequality started much earlier than Ruse's model states. (Besides, it is also important to consider the evidence of agricultural societies—for example, in Maidanetske, Nebelivka, and Talianki in contemporary Ukraine—that did not exhibit signs of class disparities and a central administration, which means that agriculture is not tied to inequality, contradicting Ruse's model.)

Truth be told, despite the number of shortcomings pointed out above, *Why We Hate* does not lack virtues. Its writing style is engaging and its chapters evince an attempt to connect academic literature with everyday life and current events. Ruse intends to persuade readers that they should undo what agriculture did on humans and urges them to 'pick up the torch and do better' (p. 261).